

Remarks at a Lunch With Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq and
Military Personnel at Fort Belvoir, Virginia

July 26, 2006

President Bush. Thank you all for such gracious hospitality. I thought I would drop by with the Prime Minister of Iraq. [*Laughter*] I wanted him to be with some of the finest citizens in the United States of America.

I appreciate our Ambassador to Iraq joining us today, Zal Khalilzad. Mr. Ambassador, thank you for coming. Ambassador Sumaydi, from Iraq to the United States, is with us. Ambassador, thank you for coming. I appreciate the Members of the United States Senate who have joined us, Senator Warner and Senator Allen. Thank you all for being here. I appreciate you joining us. I want to thank Congressman Jim Moran and Congressman Tom Davis for joining us.

Mr. Prime Minister, obviously, Members of the United States Congress are interested in you. [*Laughter*] They're also interested in the United States military. And they know what I know, that anytime we've got a man or woman in uniform in harm's way, they deserve all the possible support necessary to complete the mission.

I want to thank Colonel Lauritzen and all the folks who made this visit possible. It's an honor to be here, and it's an honor to be with the family members of our troops.

Mr. Prime Minister, when I speak to our troops, I also talk to their loved ones, because you can't have a strong United States military without the support of the military families. Our troops have sacrificed, and as they have done so, so have our military families. And so today we pay respect for the men and women who wear the uniform and their loved ones. We're proud of you.

There's no better place to come than Fort Belvoir, Mr. Prime Minister, because here there are some 120 military commands representing the Army, Navy, Air

Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, all branches of the United States military who have served with distinction in fighting the terrorists who would like to do us harm and prevent your good country from becoming a democracy.

I tell our folks that success in Iraq is necessary for the security of the United States, and it's necessary for the peace of the world. One of the things that—one of the lessons we can learn from history is that freedom and liberty and democracies have got the capacity to convert enemies into allies and to lay the foundation for peace.

Now, Mr. Prime Minister, we were deeply moved when 12 million of your citizens went to the polls last December. It was really a remarkable statement, wasn't it? Twelve million citizens, who at one time had lived under the thumb of a brutal tyrant, went to the polls and said, "We want to be free." And out of that election, Mr. Prime Minister, you and your Government have emerged.

We respect the fact that your Government represents the will of the Iraqi people. One thing the Prime Minister told me getting out of the limousine, after having flown on the helicopter—[*laughter*—was that he longs for the day when the Iraqi children can live in a hopeful society. That's what he wants. He wants the Iraqi people to enjoy the benefits that most people in other countries enjoy. It is a simple concept in many ways, yet is profound, because my reaction upon hearing his words was, this man will succeed if he cares first and foremost about the people and the condition of the Iraqi people. If he's the kind of leader like I know he is, who cares about generations of Iraqis to come, he will be successful.

We've got hard work to do together, Mr. Prime Minister. We were talking here at the table, and I was commenting that it's amazing, isn't it, where some people decide to kill innocent lives to stop freedom. And frankly, that's a hard concept for some of us to understand. But I understand this: That in order for freedom to succeed, those folks have got to be brought to justice. They cannot be allowed to kill the innocent.

And that's why we've sent some of our finest citizens to help you, Mr. Prime Minister. We want you to succeed. It's in our Nation's interest that you succeed. And I'm confident we will succeed. The Prime Minister came, and he didn't say this directly to me, but I could tell by looking in my eyes, he wanted to make sure that this was a President who kept his word. I've told the Iraqi people, we stand with you, and that no matter how tough it gets, we will complete this mission. We owe it to those who have served in combat. We owe it to those who have lost a limb. We owe it to those who have lost a life.

Fort Belvoir lost a good man recently in Sergeant First Class Scott Smith. He was killed by an IED. He helped save lives. He helped lay that foundation for peace. And in honor of his memory and in the memory of others who have gone before him, in honor of the thousands of Iraqis who have died at the hands of terrorists, we will complete the mission. It's in our interest, Mr. Prime Minister, that we succeed together.

And so I've asked you to come, to be in the midst of those who have served our country. The amazing thing about our military is that people have had to say, "I want to serve." Every person you see here in uniform, Mr. Prime Minister, has volunteered to serve the United States of America. And in so doing, they have set a fantastic example for generations to come, and they have made the United States of America incredibly proud.

So I'd like to welcome you to the podium, Mr. Prime Minister. And as you come up here and look at the folks here in uniform, you've got to know how proud their Commander in Chief is to be able to serve alongside of them as we do our duty with honor for our country.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Maliki. I would like to thank the President for his invitation. And I would also like to thank the Members of Congress who are with us today here—and to the sons and families of the Armed Forces who are here with us in this celebration. When I stand here in front of you and I salute you, I would like to appreciate what you have done and what you have achieved.

I appreciate your colleagues who offered their lives on the land of Iraq, and I tell you that Iraqis will never forget these sacrifices because they have really participated in ridding Iraq of dictatorship, one of the ugliest regimes that the region has known. And we are happy to be partners in this holy task of fighting terrorism and establishing democracy.

Iraq, because of what you have offered, because of what your sons have offered, your families have offered, has now moved from dictatorship to democracy; from oppression, torture chambers, chemical weapons, and now into a space of freedom, liberty, and partnership; from depravation and absolute poverty into the condition where we now are looking forward to economic prosperity, because Iraq is a rich country, and the previous regime has wasted all the wealth of Iraq in his adventures.

I sympathize with those who made sacrifices, and I sympathize with the families who have lost some loved ones. And I appreciate this sacrifice and this suffering, because I am one of the people who sacrificed and suffered in Iraq. The previous

regime had sentenced me to death and actually has executed 67 members of my family and relatives. And I can feel the bitterness of the loss when someone loses a dear member of his family, a son or a spouse.

When blood mixes together in the field, aiming to achieve one goal, this blood will help in establishing long-lasting relationship between us. Our relationship will stay forever.

Terrorists still carry out, on daily basis, these crazy actions against innocent civilians: their suicide bombs, their car bombs against the innocent civilians who have nothing to do with the conflict in Iraq. They want to kill democracy as they kill humans. But they will definitely fail, because we are committed to success, and we are committed to democracy. And the daily killing does not prevent Iraqis from carrying out and going along with their daily lives. And we are confident that we will succeed, because you and people like you are helping us to confront terrorism—terrorism that is spreading in our land—with foreign support.

Lastly, on behalf of myself and on behalf of the Iraqi people, I would like to thank you and thank your families. I would like to appreciate your losses, your sacrifices, appreciate the bitterness of those who have lost loved ones. I hope that you can go past your losses, and I hope that you can compensate it with—compensate it about what's happened.

And we feel pain and sorrow for every drop of blood that falls in Iraq. But once again, we give you all the salute—we salute you, and we thank you very much for all that you've offered to Iraq.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:17 p.m. at the Fort Belvoir Community Club. In his remarks, he referred to Iraq's Ambassador to the U.S. Samir Shakir al-Sumaydi; Col. Brian W. Lauritzen, USA, garrison commander, Ft. Belvoir; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. Prime Minister Maliki spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Legislation Expanding American Homeownership *July 26, 2006*

I am pleased the House passed the "Expanding American Homeownership Act of 2006."

The Federal Housing Administration has helped millions of Americans become homeowners in communities throughout our country. I appreciate the House's efforts to modernize this important program to ensure that it reflects the demands of today's marketplace and addresses the current needs of potential home buyers. By

providing the FHA with increased flexibility for mortgage downpayment requirements and the authority to tailor financing to suit a family's unique situation, this bill will improve FHA's ability to help lower and moderate-income families achieve the American Dream.

I encourage the Senate to join the House and pass this critical legislation.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 5121.